

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 15, 2009

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Feinstein and Ranking Member Alexander:

We are writing to ask for your support in appropriating critical funding for wildfire mitigation activities through the Federal Land Management Agencies--the U.S. Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the National Parks Service. Funding directed towards these priorities through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) has been essential to public safety and will enable Colorado communities to make progress towards fulfilling their fire mitigation plans.

As you consider FY10 appropriations requests, we ask you to give special consideration to programs that support fuel reduction and safety on federal lands where approved projects are waiting to be funded and for programs that facilitate fuel reduction efforts on non-federal lands. Of particular importance in preventing wildfire and improving forest health are the State Fire Assistance Program and the Community Fire Protection Program.

Funded through the State and Private Forestry (S&PF) branch of the U.S. Forest Service, the State Fire Assistance Program includes financial and technical help for fire prevention, fire control, and prescribed fire use. The State Fire Assistance program was funded at \$78 million in FY2009.

The Community Fire Protection Program authorizes the Forest Service in conjunction with state forestry agencies to assist local fire protection planning, education, and fire plan implementation. The program was authorized at \$35 million annually for FY2002 - FY2007, and "such sums as necessary" thereafter. To date however, no budget line items have been enacted for this program.

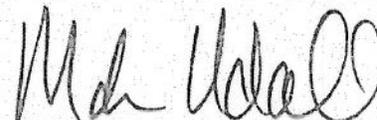
Our western communities and land management agencies need all the support they can get in mitigating any wildfire conditions enhanced by a changing climate and the current threats posed by the mountain pine beetle epidemic. This funding is a smart investment that prioritizes funding where it is most effective and used most efficiently.

Thank you for your consideration and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Senator Michael F. Bennet



Senator Mark Udall